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Volunteer Security Team vs. Supplier's Guard

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This is ONE guy's perspective that must be weighed against law, insurance, culture, etc.

Note: This is a separate question from whether your team is armed, how they are identified, or what they are called. This is about who fills the role — congregation members or outside professionals.

Most churches build their service security team with volunteers from within the congregation. Some outsource security functions like guards. Many eventually use both. Each approach has real strengths and real gaps. The right answer depends on your congregation size, your budget, your threat environment, and the quality of volunteers you can realistically recruit and retain. A well-trained, committed volunteer team will outperform an indifferent supplier's guard every time — and the reverse is equally true. Also key is the experience and commitment of the team leader, staff leader.

Make sure this evaluation is in context with the 24x7x365 security function/needs of the church. Do we use Hybrid for weekend services and Outsource for all other times, for example?

	Volunteer Security Team	Supplier's Security Guard(s)	Hybrid: Volunteers + Contractor
Pros	<p>Congregation members know the regular attendees — they will notice someone who does not belong.</p> <p>Higher investment in outcomes — volunteers are protecting their own community.</p> <p>Lower cost — most volunteers serve without pay.</p> <p>More scalable for large events — you can activate more volunteers than you can afford to contract.</p>	<p>Trained and licensed professionals — background checked, certified, insured and legally authorized.</p> <p>Reduces liability exposure for the church in certain incident scenarios.</p> <p>Does not require the church to build and sustain a training program. (But you still should)</p> <p>Provides a credible visible deterrent, especially for high-profile events.</p>	<p>Covers both the relational knowledge of the congregation and the professional credibility of licensed security.</p> <p>Supplier Guards can anchor the perimeter while volunteers work the interior. (See our Post prioritization Resource at https://askmccconnell.com/checklists/)</p> <p>Scales well for high-attendance events without abandoning the volunteer program.</p> <p>Easier to put limits on the volunteers that would be covered by the Supplier</p>

<p>Cons</p>	<p>Training quality varies widely — many church volunteer teams receive little to no formal instruction.</p> <p>Turnover is unpredictable — volunteers move, change schedules, or disengage, many times at the last minute. Team Leader is CRITICAL.</p> <p>Legal and liability exposure if a volunteer acts outside their authority.</p> <p>Volunteers may hesitate to act against a known congregation member.</p> <p>Qualifications requirements and management of cop/military wanna-be or “I was a cop, I was military” bravado can complicate things.</p> <p>Some states may require licensing or general</p> <p>If church is “no firearm zone” (signage) but they allowed their volunteers to carry can be a major problem.</p>	<p>Supplier’s (and their guards) do not know your congregation — they cannot distinguish a regular from an unknown.</p> <p>May not be of the same faith and beliefs</p> <p>Higher cost — meaningful outsourced coverage at every service adds up quickly.</p> <p>Quality varies by supplier — low-bid suppliers often provide minimal actual capability.</p> <p>A supplier’s guard’s primary accountability is to their employer, not your congregation.</p>	<p>More complex to coordinate — requires clear role definition between volunteer and supplier and staff and leadership.</p> <p>Highest cost option.</p> <p>Requires a security point of contact on staff or in volunteer leadership to manage the relationship.</p> <p>Training together can be complicated.</p>
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<p>Also Consider</p>	<p>What is your volunteer team's actual training level/schedule? Being willing and being trained are not the same.</p> <p>Establish a minimum training requirement — and enforce it. A team with standards outperforms a team without them.</p> <p>Consider liability coverage: does your church insurance cover volunteers acting in a security capacity?</p> <p>Who does campus / basic lock up, alarm setting, and building/grounds checks, at the end of each night? Even if 1:00am?</p>	<p>If you use a supplier, visit them. Meet the account manager. Ask what training their guards receive.</p> <p>Require a site orientation for every supplier/guard before they stand post at your church.</p> <p>Define exactly what authority the supplier/guard has — and put it in the contract.</p> <p>Who does campus / basic lock up, alarm setting, and building/grounds checks, at the end of each night? Even if 1:00am?</p>	<p>Define the chain of command clearly: who is in charge during an incident — the volunteer lead or the supplier guard?</p> <p>Brief both teams together before every service or event they share.</p> <p>Review supplier performance quarterly — do not assume consistency because a contract exists.</p> <p>Who does campus / basic lock up, alarm setting, and building/grounds checks, at the end of each night? Even if 1:00am?</p>
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